

Planning and Development Services Division

Historic Preservation Office

7447 East Indian School Road Scottsdale, Arizona 85251

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Memorandum

Topic: Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission Church Historic Significance Report

Correction

Action Requested: Direction to staff regarding changes to the Historic Significance Report

Meeting Date: February 3, 2022

From: Ben Moriarity, Senior Planner

Through: Jesus Murillo, Historic Preservation Officer

The owners/representatives of the Old Adobe Mission have provided a request, and supporting documents, to "correct" the details regarding the history of the land acquisition making possible the construction of the first Catholic church in Scottsdale. It would appear that the current information regarding ownership within the Historic Significance Report originated from an interview with a tenant of the building. The provided warranty deed, property owner and a news article from 1983 would support the assertion that the property was purchased for \$600. Edits will be made to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission Church Historic Significance Report with the Historic Preservation Commission's direction.

Attachments:

- 1. Memorandum from The Old Adobe Mission Board of Directors
- 2. 1983 News article confirming Brophy's connection with the purchase
- 3. 1998 Irv Fleming Interview (Scottsdale Symphony Orchestra representative, tenant within mission church for 20yrs at the time of the interview)
- 4. Draft Legislative edits to the Historic Significance Report

The Old Adobe Mission 3817 North Brown Ave., Scottsdale, AZ 85251

December 7, 2021

Mr. Ben Moriarity Planning & Development Dept. City of Scottsdale 7447 E. Indian School Road Scottsdale AZ, 85251

Dear Mr. Moriarity:

Submitted herewith are four documents in support of our request to correct an erroneous statement included in our Application for Listing Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission Church on the Scottsdale Historic Register. The statement to be removed under the "History" designation is: "The E. O. Brown family donated a site for the building in 1927." The correct reference to obtaining the site for the church building should be stated as: "Rev. Antimo Nebreda, a Claretian Priest and Pastor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Phoenix, Arizona, signed a Warranty Deed on March 22, 1926, attesting to the fact that he had purchased a parcel of land from Mr. Henry George of Scottsdale, Arizona, for the sum of \$600.00. That transaction was in favor of the Most Rev. Daniel P. Gercke, Bishop of the Diocese of Tucson, who provided the payment for the purchase of three lots on which the diocese would build a future church. Additionally, it is general knowledge that the \$600.00 was covered by donations to the diocese by Mr, Frank Brophy (Banker) and Mr. A. F. Mahoney (Merchant)."

The following four documents, included as Attachments1-4, are submitted as backup proof for our requested correction of history.

Atch #1 - Copy 1911 Maricopa County Land Ownership Plat Map.

Atch #2 - Copy enlarged Section of cited Plat Map highlighting Scottsdale and showing the area owned by W. M. George.

Atch #3 - Copy original Plat Map for Scottsdale, Arizona. Highlighted is the location for the Plats 5,6 and 7 that were sold by Mr. George to the Diocese of Tucson.

Atch #4 - Copy of Warranty Deed executed by Rev. Nebreda on behalf of Bishop Gercke, Diocese of Tucson.

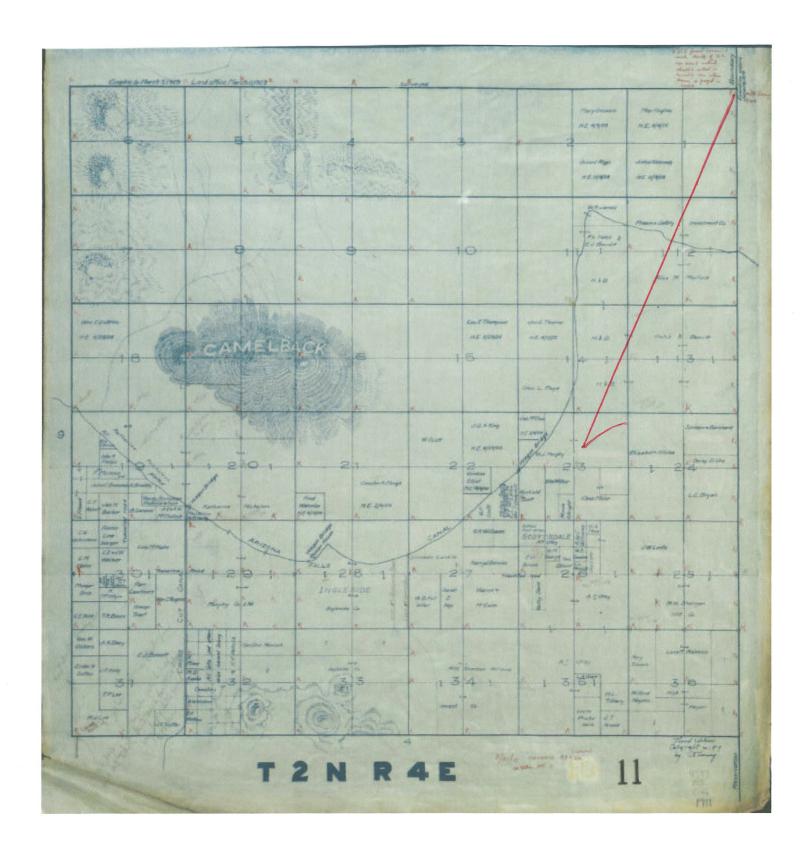
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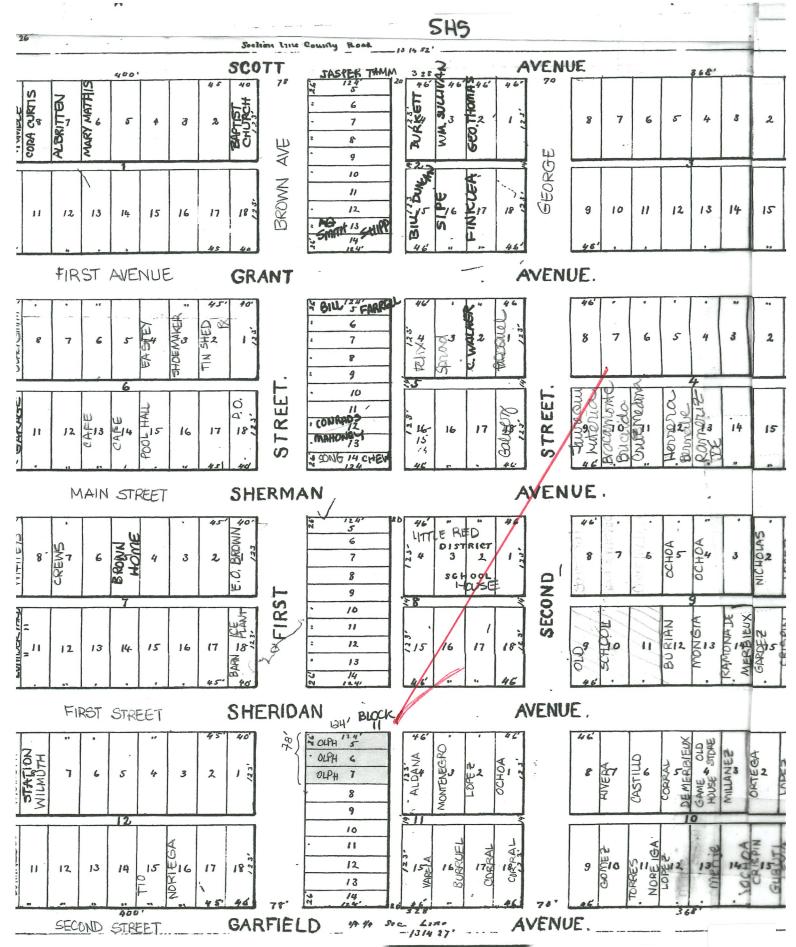
Rad Masinelli

President, Board of Directors

4 Atch (Copies):

- 1. Maricopa Land Ownership Map
- 2. Enlarged Section of Plat Map
- 3. Scottsdale Plat Map
- 4. Warranty Deed





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On a bright and sunny Sunday in 1924, a handful of people gathered in a vacant store at the corner of Brown Avenue and Main Street to attend the first Catholic Mass held in Scottsdale. The mass was celebrated by a visiting priest, Father A.G. Nebreda. Mexican families predominated in the little group . . . migrants from the South who had originally come to this area to work in the cotton fields. Scottsdale was then a tiny farming community, and these newcomers had settled on small plots of land just east of Brown Avenue, with most of their homes standing where the Doubletree Inn, the Scottsdale Mall and the Center for the Arts are today.

Over the next twenty-five years, various visiting priests from Phoenix and Tempe came regularly to celebrate Mass in Scottsdale. Not until 1949 did the small assembly grow large enough to warrant a full-time resident pastor.

The most pressing need for this little band of Catholics was for some kind of church, but it would be almost ten long years before this need was filled. A.F. Mahoney, the owner of a Scottsdale general store, and Frank Brophy of Phoenix had given money for the purchase of three lots on the corner of Brown Avenue and First Street, but times were hard and the little community simply did not have the money for a building. In "make-do" fashion, the visiting priests held services at a variety of places . . . the vacant store, in private homes and at Coronado School, now known as the Little Red Schoolhouse on Scottsdale Mall and occupied by the Scottsdale Chamber of Commerce.

In 1930 a building fund was established, which netted small donations of money and many pledges from the Mexican families to work on the building when construction began. The men began the long process of making adobe blocks for the structure, but progress was slow. All of this changed when a young, energetic priest who spoke fluent Spanish arrived in Tempe and became the visiting pastor for Scottsdale. Father James P. Davis fired his flock with enthusiasm for the job before them, and work began in earnest.

In a series of letters to the Scottsdale Progress in 1949, Jesus Corral, of the Corral family that has owned Los Olivos Restaurant on Second Street for nearly fifty years, wrote his memories of the building of Scottsdale's first Catholic Church. He credits Father Davis with getting the job accomplished, describing him as having "a way about him that made a man want to work with him . . . he was as practical in managing a construction crew as he was powerful in delivering a sermon."

Everyone pitched in to help, young and old alike. Those who could not pledge hours of work donated sacks of cement or lumber. Contributions came in from people all over the Valley, and more money was raised with monthly tamale dinners and dances. The men set about to produce the remaining adobe blocks needed, 14,000 of them in all, forming them from the dirt on the site. Ninety-year-old Don Jose Burian hauled gravel from the Salt River in his wagon, and Adolfo Cabanillos brought in a huge, flat river rock to be used for the cornerstone.

Local building contractor Robert Evans, also the owner of Jokake Inn, designed the mission-style church and furnished the blueprints. Many of the Mexican men worked for him in his building business and their wives and daughters worked at Jokake, so it was very natural for him to offer his help. Evans supervised the construction and Jesus Corral served as foreman.

When ground-breaking day arrived, the workers still

lacked many necessities. In Corral's words, they had "a sad conglomeration of half-worn tools. The men standing around had seen more days of hard labor than you see tamales in a fiesta, but they meant business. The old ladies were rejoicing. Some men were very happy that we had finally begun, and others who were not religious at all were there simply because they had promised their wives."

The Evans Construction Company loaned them the necessary tools, including a small cement mixer, and the volunteer workers began the task of laying the adobe blocks, each one weighing fifty pounds. With the walls well underway, the next large expense would be the roof. The Catholic Extension Society in Chicago sent \$1,000 to pay for the heavy ten-by-twelve beams for the roof, along with the stipulation that the new place of worship be named Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

The workers came and went, depending upon whether they could find other jobs. Those were the days of the Great Depression and the men who were unemployed donated their time to the church. As the work proceeded, not everything went smoothly. One family refused to join in the project, and disagreements arose, including a dispute over whether the men should curse or smoke on the church grounds. Father Davis wisely told them that the building would be blessed before its use, cancelling out such transgressions.

Flagstone, which was cheaper than a solid concrete slab, was laid for a floor and the walls, inside and out, were plastered with a brown mixture of dirt and sand. The Dominguez family imported from Mexico a beautiful statue of the Mother of Perpetual Help to stand next to the altar. Barnabe Herrera, a local Mexican tinsmith, made the small stained glass windows and each family painstakingly built its own kneeling bench and pew. In later years, the congregation was able to afford the finishing coats of white plaster for the walls and a low fence around the property.

The little Spanish mission-style church, so lovingly fashioned by those who would attend it, was finished in October of 1933. To its builders, who had waited so long and worked so hard, it was grander than the finest cathedral in the land.

For years, it served the Catholic population of Scottsdale well, but in the 1950's the town's growth mushroomed. By 1955 the small building was not large enough to accomodate the swelling congregation of newcomers, and the parish began the initial buildings which are part of its present church and school complex along Miller Road, north of Second Street. The old place of worship on Brown Avenue, now in the middle of a business district, is still owned by the parish. It was used for a number of years as a meeting place for the Knights of Columbus, and it is now the home of the Scottsdale Symphony Orchestra.

And what has happened to its builders? The Mexican workers who labored to construct it have left the area, their homes cleared away to make room for the new civic complex. The young priest, Father Davis, went on to various other posts and rose in the church to become an archbishop. Now in his eighties, he is in fragile health and confined to a Phoenix rest home.

Still a charming structure, with its white walls, simple low lines and tall bell tower, the little mission church is a pleasing sight amidst the bustling commercial center of Scottsdale. It is also a lasting reminder of what abiding faith and hard work can accomplish.

Notes taken from conversation with Irv Fleming regarding the Mission OLPH Church on Nov. 18, 1998 and on Dec. 8, 1998

ymphony office-945-8071

The Mission Church, former Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, has been home to the Scottsdale Symphony Orchestra since 1977. The Orchestra's first concert held Nov. 24, 1975. Irv Fleming, musical director of the Scottsdale Symphony Orchestra, conducted the orchestra's first concert on Nov. 24, 1975.

He is a friend of Father Eugene Maguire and lay minister at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

Father Healey is the senior priest at OLPH and Irv said he plans to sell the Little Mission Church. Irv would like for the city of Scottsdale to buy it.

Mission Church property was gifted by the E.O. Brown family in 1927.

The lot is 60 by 100 and property valued, Irv Believes at \$100,000

Fleming has received a letter from Father Healey giving notice to vacate the property by July of 2000. This is what prompted a meeting with several members of the Symphony's board of directors. Irv Fleming did not attend this meeting because he wanted everyone to speak freely about the situation.

Irv is a trustee of Mission Church until year 2000.

Meeting with Father Healey: "They batted around many things," Irv said. "It went well...Father Healey backed away from eviction but said he did have several offers for the property. He talked about wanting to sell...I'm hoping we can come up with some kind of contribution in terms of a lease. I am in favor that we either get a lease to buy or make a good equity down payment and take the rest on a 10-year balloon...small lot only 10,000 square feet and you'd be talking about \$300,000. All I'm saying that we offer him (Father Healey) something....He just wants to generate cash. If we rent this property he would get the money. If he sold the property, the diocese would get the money. We would make a donation to the parish every month but if we defaulted on a mortgage then we could re-negotiate.

The main thing is we are starting some sort of communication."

On Preservation: Now in terms of preservation I would have no objections to being on the list unless there were certain stipulatory rights given to the Scottsdale Center for the Arts....

I am very much in favor of having this on preservation list as it would save it from becoming commercial property.

'Ve have put over \$200,000 into this building. The electric bill would cost \$1,000 a

month to keep it open..We've spent close to \$100,000 in utilities. These places deteriorate very quickly.

itle to Property: There is clear title on the property. We've seen the title...sometime in the last 10 or 15 years the diocese had it "quiet titled." If no claim or no demand is placed upon the property then the property free and clear. Back about 1984 restricted deed was that it be used for religious services and if not then it would revert to the E.O. Brown family...whole piece of property was Brown's farm. This area was really a small Industrial Park — Cavalliere's, the Cotton Gin, adobe brick yard, Los Olivos Tavern

**Summary:** Irv would hate to see the Symphony move out except to a permanent location. So, yes, the Symphony is looking for a permanent home. We have poured a quarter of a million into the building over last few years. We've had the building for 20 years without any pressure. No one has ever put any conditional situation on the building.

It would cost from \$200,000 to bring building up to code. Roof is main concern. Metal over shake.

Forsees being asked to pay \$500 to \$1,000 a month rent on a lease agreement or \$5,000 down on a mortgage payment and \$10,000 a year to pay diocese. A good faith payment.

ventually Scottsdale must decide how much of a cultural community it wants to be _ ballet, opera, symphony, etc. and provide the space.

Reason the building may be sold:

The bishop is looking for \$25 million for a high school and he could allow the diocese to put a lean on all of the church property in order to raise funds. Anything is possible.

Planning 25th anniversary celebration to begin in 1999.

Notes taken by Lois McFarland

Nov. 18, 1998 by telephone & Dec 8, 1998 at Coco's with Doug Sydnor

# Historic Significance and Integrity Assessment Report for Listing Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission Church on the Scottsdale Historic Register

## Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission Church

3821 N. Brown Avenue, Scottsdale, Arizona Scottsdale Historic Register No. SHR –01-7 Zoning Case No. 1-ZN-2001

#### **Background**

In July of 1999 the City Council adopted Resolution No. 5324 and Ordinance No. 3242 which established the Scottsdale Historic Register (SHR), the City's official list of historic and archeological resources with special significance in the United States, Arizona and Scottsdale history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture. Since that time the Scottsdale Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has been identifying properties that should be considered for designation on the SHR. Numerous groups and efforts have recognized Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church (OLPH) as an important building in the history of the development of the community. In 2000, as part of an Intensive Survey of Downtown Scottsdale, the church building also was identified as an architecturally significant resource. It is owned by the Catholic Church and has been leased to the Scottsdale Symphony Orchestra since 1977.

#### Historic Context: Early Town Building, 1908-1933

Scottsdale's historic development followed a pattern typically found in Western communities. Like other Arizona cities and towns, the provision of a reliable water supply was critical to sustaining the community's vitality after its initial settlement in the late 1800s. With the construction of Granite Reef Dam in 1908, followed by Roosevelt Dam in 1911, Scottsdale shared in the population boom that transformed the Salt River Valley. A main line rail connection to the national railway system completed into the Valley in 1924 provided further impetus for growth and development. During this period Scottsdale grew slowly, but steadily, as a small market town principally providing services for families involved in agriculture.

Within the core of the original Scottsdale town site are several extant buildings that represent this early period of the community's development. The date they were built, the different building types and style of their construction, their uses over the years, as well as their location, illustrate the traditional pattern of community development that occurred in Scottsdale, Arizona and throughout the West in the early twentieth century.

## Description

The historic Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church building is located at 3817-21 N. Brown Avenue on a 75 feet by 125 feet lot at the southeast corner of Brown Ave. and 1st Street. The structure is set 15 feet back on the west from Brown Avenue and 20 feet on the north from 1st Street. The property is on Parcel No. 130-23-177.

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The design is a simple regional interpretation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style of building. The building is laid out in a one-story rectangular plan. It has a medium-pitched gable roof sheathed in corrugated metal with heavy rafters and a battered curvilinear parapet wall extending above the roofline on the west front façade. The walls are three adobe bricks thick and the finish is battered, white smooth stucco. A bell tower attached to the northwest corner of the structure gives the building an asymmetrical building form along its front façade. Ten concrete buttresses support the building's south exterior wall. A chimney is also present on the building's south side. A recessed round arch defines the building's main entry, which consists of simple, double doors. There are five single pane rectangular wood frame windows without sills or lintels. Four have the original stained glass. Two small windows flank the entry. Three larger windows are located above the entryway and in the north and west walls of the bell tower. The north side bell tower window has been boarded and an air conditioning unit installed in the opening. A simple wrought iron light fixture provides detailing above the entry arch.

An arcade, added after the original structure was completed, joins the east side of the bell tower and is attached to the north side of the building. The arcade has four round arches and a gable style corrugated metal roof similar to the main roof and exposed wooden eaves flush with the wall surface. A similar course of concrete, horizontal molding defines both the front façade and arcade columns.

Other modifications to the original structure are apparent. The exterior arcade has been enclosed to create interior space, although the original arches are still evident. A stucco addition with a horizontal sliding metal window and shed type roof was added to the south end of the rear (east) elevation. Another room with a single exterior door joins this rear addition to the arcade. The roof pitches on the rear additions do not match each other or the original roof.

### History

Churches were typically one of the earliest community buildings constructed as part of the permanent settlement of a town. Worship was a unifying practice and a means of bringing civilization to the frontier. Typically, church buildings were built in more distinctive architectural styles than the other buildings of a settlement. Their design and the quality of their construction was considered important because the building represented the pride the community members had in the particular religious group to which they belonged. Our Lady of Perpetual Help is an excellent example of this aspect of the historic development of communities in the West.

The Catholic Church had an early presence in the Valley with a main church in downtown Phoenix and other mission churches to serve those who lived in outlying areas. For many years, the Catholic residents of Scottsdale had to travel to other locations or attend services in makeshift facilities with visiting priests. By the late 1920s, however, the parish had grown to a sufficient size to establish a mission to serve Scottsdale. Soon plans were made to build their own church building. The economic hard times brought by the Depression made the task of assembling the necessary funds a difficult task. A site was selected in Scottsdale's original town site near the barrio where the first Hispanics settled as they migrated to the valley to work in the cotton industry. The E.O. Brown family donated a site for the building in 1927. Rev. Antimo Nebreda, signed the Warranty Deed on March 22, 1926, purchasing the land from Mr. Henry George of Scottsdale, Arizona, for a sum of \$600. That transaction was in favor of the Most Rev. Daniel P. Gercke, Bishop of the Diocese of Tucson, who provided the payment for the

purchase of the three lots on which the diocese would build a future church. Additionally, it is general knowledge that the \$600 was covered by donations to the diocese by Mr. Frank Brophy (Banker) and Mr. A.F. Mahoney (Merchant). Robert Evans, then owner of the Jokake Inn, provided the plans for the building, equipment, and tools. Donations from the Catholic community, locally and from other parts of the nation, provided funds for building materials. Volunteer crews of parishioners, primarily from the

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Hispanic community, constructed the building. The workers fashioned thousands of large adobe bricks, each weighing 50 pounds, for its exterior walls. The church was completed in 1933, serving as "a symbol of community togetherness, pride and hard work" as was noted by *The Scottsdale Daily Progress* in an October 1983 article announcing the structure's 50th anniversary.

The stained-glass windows were made by Bernabe Herrera, a Scottsdale tinsmith and later the parish catechism teacher. Each family made its own pew. The finished church seated 150 people and the first Mass was celebrated in October 1933. Over the next twenty years the parish steadily grew and a larger church at Miller Road and Main Street was built in 1956. Since that time, the historic Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church has remained a vital community space, used by numerous groups. The Scottsdale Symphony Orchestra has rented the building since 1977.

#### Significance

The original OLPH Church is historically significant for a number of reasons. Its form and design is an excellent illustration of the building that typically occurred as settlements became established as permanent towns. Further, as the only remaining church building from Scottsdale's early history, it provides physical testimony as to the importance of the Catholic Church and other religious groups in the development of Scottsdale and the Valley. Its location, construction history and uses over time also provide tangible evidence of the local Hispanic families' contribution and role in the evolution of Scottsdale. Architecturally, the building is one of the most notable structures within the Downtown and it is an excellent example of adobe construction. Although modest in scale and appearance, the building exhibits a high degree of integrity with many intact features that represent the distinctive characteristics of the local interpretation of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture.